Three Seasons' Flowers

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By Alfred Lambourne

To My Wife

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I.

EHOLD, how spring doth ope
the lilac buds!
And oh, for words that choice
and dainty be
To tell how memory each
moment floods,
Of vanished dreams their fragrance brings
to me!
What words shall their exquisiteness
suggest,
The blanched edge, the flush within the cell,
A hidden glow like vermil hues that rest
Deep in the cold heart of a tropic shell?
These leaves take on the fire of pink and
white,
That marks the advent of the eastern ray,
And this they hold with chilliness unite,
Quenched in cold azure of the showery
day.
No line hath power to utter my delight,
As here I rest beneath the blossomed
spray!

II.

AN, after all, that legend be a truth—
That mystic spring whereof men long to drink,
Whose waters hold the gift of lasting youth,
And mortal flesh with joys immortal link?
The inner life doth with this essence wake;
A youth perpetual the lilacs bring;
My thirst of soul therein, I eager slake,
And draw a subtle virtue from the spring!
Here, childlike innocence and passion blend;
The rapture of the May, all fragrant sleeps;
For fond hope lost and trust, they make amend,
As through the heart life's springtime once more sweeps;
This bloom hath treasure brought me without end,
A calm doth give to manhood's stormy deeps.

III.

ITH moisture strange, the lilacs fill mine eyes,
A gladsome dew that gathers into tears;
Entranced I stand, lost in a sweet surprise,
While joys divine come back from out the years.
Some purpose was there in the pregnant past—
The cause of transports sent unto our time?
These lilacs seem as from a garden cast,
Which flourished once within the happy prime.
A sweet ingenuousness these blossoms hold,
Which they unto that primal purpose owe;
Secrete there dwells amid each leafy fold,
The golden age that antedated woe.
This scented bloom rebreathes the troths were told—
The artless life of some sweet long ago.

IV.

GAIN with spring the lilac doth not fail,
The Lord of Day makes glad his wide demesne,
Sweet Hesperides night's deeps of ether sail,
The far-stretched valleys melt in lucious green.
And high above the mountains' shining snow,
The silver clouds up-build their massive towers.
I watch the scented clusters open slow,
And feel myself once more in fairy bowers.
Awake! and yet so soon thou art betrayed,—
Ere one can count, the occult virtue dies!
And then, how quick my irised visions fade,
My dreamland palace, all in ruin lies!
With you, O lilacs, I have backward strayed
To May of youth and April-weeping skies.

V.

HE roses snap asunder matter's chain,
And leave the soul to wander free the while,
Where art and nature hold an equal reign—
On templed rocks of far Ægean isle,
By dim Euphrates and old Egypt's stream—
And with all poets their emotions share,
With Omar, Orpheus, and Sappho, dream
What splendid is and passionate and fair.
Oh, now I list the sirens singing clear,
Beyond Pelorus and Tyrrhenian sea;
Shrill laughter of the green-haired mermaids hear;
The dark-eyed Persian maidens well nigh see,
Where all the vales are crimson far and near,
Scattering flowers at the Gul Reazee.

VI.

OSE-PURPLE are the mountain peaks by day,
'Neath cloudless skies, all purple-brown by night;
And when the rising moon begins her sway,
A hush profound falls over vale and height.
Upon the roses' splendor let me gloat,
Or on fond lips now waste my heart in sighs;
Love's fulness throbs and bubbles at the throat,
The sweets of life are mine in richest guise.
What more could heart or soul from nature claim,
Now that no canker eats away love's health?
Love has no purpose, leaves all other aim,
Than this, to gather up the offered wealth:
The roses' bounty I tell o'er, the same
As greedy misers count their gold, in stealth.

VII.

F LOVE triumphant—love's delightful pain,
Behold the rose, a symbol and a sign!
Let no rough hand, with vandal touch, profane
The flower whose beauty makes its life divine.
O, to the passion that within it burns,
This grace, these hues of damask witness bear.
So, too, this boon of outward semblance turns
To ravishment the ache of old despair.
In this full time, this hey-day of the year,
My soul, en rapport with the fairness wrought,
Goes with all joy upon its swift career
To find itself to this one lesson brought—
Here with the queenly rose, I gird the sphere,
All earth possess, in luxury of thought.

VIII.

HE rose! the rose! Ah, let me clasp the rose!
A witness she that beauty is eterne.
O, my heart's tumult here can find repose;
Here in content, the soul may cease to yearn.
From love's excess, the poet now must sing—
A voice must find unto his noble rage;
O, to the rose my vassal love I bring,
Ah, may she live for once upon my page!
The rose! the rose! O, now the rose is queen—
Love and the roses animate my line!
O, love's own flower, as o'er the rose I lean,
Makes drunk the senses and this heart of mine;
The rose! the rose! O yes, the rose serene
Intoxicates with beauty as with wine!

IX.

H, NOW is taught the wisest of all lore,
And like this Lovers' Month, the roses glow,
Enamored youth upon each other pore,
And love's sweet tale in words impassioned flow.
To thousand hearts the bridal hymn is sung,
Conjugal vows are made in whispered tone;
The rose, the rose, as wedding bells are swung,
All thought makes fervid as the burning zone.
Sun-flushed or tear'd with dew, the petals gleam
By lustrous day, or in night's tranced noon;
With honied wealth of life, the moments teem,
And heart to heart melts in delicious swoon.
Can aught of fear or strife disturb love's dream,
Made perfect by the roses—gift of June?

X.

H, PEERLESS is the beauty of the rose!
Within its heart, a magic deep there hides;
But love to love its riches will disclose,
And I have learned the secret there abides.
The roses take me to nymph-haunted founts,
Where'er this golden summer moon now shines;
Dodonas' woods, and purple classic mounts,
Astarte's, Venus', Isis,' broken shrines.
To Athens, Thebes, lost Baylon, and Tyre;
Where sings the bulbul and where moans the dove;
Where still the temple tells of fond desire;
Where fanes are grassed, or where sands drift above;
All places where hath burned the heavenly fire,
Where men have dreamed of beauty and of love!

XI.

OUCHED by a pale light from the autumn sun,
The massed chrysanthemums droop by the path,
Calm, serious flowers that mad passion shun,
And life begin now others ended hath.
To me they seem like to a pensive child,
As one given those whose heads are touched with gray;
Like this wan season, they are tame and mild,
Though they be decked in colors bright and gay.
In harmony they come with this dim morn,
When wrapt in chilly mist all nature grieves.
As she would fall asleep all labor-worn,
A sigh the universal mother heaves,
Delivers to the year her latest born,
Nipt by the hoar-frost, hid by drifting leaves.

XII.

YES, November's children are these flowers,
And they the vernal joys can never know;
In listless apathy they pass the hours,
And see the garden aged and faded grow.
Yes, they are symbols of these days and nights,
An evolution fitting heavy time,
Of this dark month, all empty of delights,
Whose humor sullen saddens every rhyme.
Now slow the northern clouds invade the sky,
And shadows thick, the garden overspread,
But here the tardy blossoms meet the eye,
A senile brightness 'gainst the hues of lead;
The moaning wind proclaims the winter nigh,
Tells that the year will soon be cold and dead.

XIII.

WITH thy coming, light and cheer depart,
Cold bloom of sadness, autumn's last of flowers.
To rueful days thy life is set apart
When o'er decrepitude a wild sky lowers.
I see thy lissome petals that unclose
To see the sun behind a thickened veil.
Thou diest soon, for lo! the whirling snows,
The ruthless archer's shafts of sleet and hail!
Yet pass, though on thy death pale dole attends,
The changed time is vocal with lament;
Not thou alone must go, here quickly ends
That mood whose loss the year makes indigent.
O'er thee, sad flower, the winged storm impends,
And the short season of thy life is spent.

XIV.

WHY wait so long the staid chrysanthemums,
To slow expand, nor at their lot repine?
Why wait they until the time of faintness comes,
And wan and pale the stars autumnal shine?
How can these stricken plants refuse to yield
Their sober beauty to the summer's blaze,
Keep pain's existence in the bud concealed,
And languid smile as swift the year decays?
Strange lives that come to make a round complete;
Blossom and flower surviving numberless;
'Tis but a world all pallid now they greet,
Companionship to keep with weariness:
Therein we see the end to passion's heat,
The calm that follows life's fierce toil and stress.

Finis